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# ZANARDELLI'S SERVICES TO ITALY.

BY DR. GUIDO BIAGI.

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GIUSEPPE ZANARDELLI was the first Italian statesman to hold the office of Premier in the full meaning of the word. His predecessors in the Presidency of the Council were, one and all, merely heads of Departments, and enjoyed the questionable authority with which a *primus inter pares* is invested. The system held good as long as it was political sentiment which guided the steps of the lately united nation, just out of the revolutionary wave; but as soon as the increase of population produced prosperity at home and developed influence abroad, Italy took her place among the monarchies of Europe. The adoption then of the sound principle of division of labor became a necessity, and the Presidency of the Council acquired a new character of special responsibility.

Few contemporary facts are so remarkable as the economical resurrection of Italy after a depression that lasted ten years. Looking back to the financial year 1893-94, which closed with a deficit of fifty-eight million francs, and to that of 1897-98, when the deficit was reduced to one million, it seems almost a dream that, since that period, each year has closed with an annual surplus, of a maximum of forty-one millions in 1900-01, and a minimum of five millions in the preceding year. Now Italy looks forward to an annual excess of fourteen millions.

This happy result was not obtained by increased taxation, but as the natural result of the strenuous work of the people at large. According to the census of 1900, Italy had 32,966,307 inhabitants, and a short time ago, Signor Prinetti, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Zanardelli Cabinet, announced proudly to Parliament that at least eight millions of Italians resided abroad. Now the national currency, once so depreciated, is at par; and

the national income, which was 1,250 million francs in 1871, reached 1,857 millions in 1901.

Imports and exports have been gradually increasing, and reduction of taxation is contemplated by the Government.

It is evident that no single statesman, however exceptionally endowed, could effect such a thorough turn in the tide. Signor Zanardelli exerted in behalf of the economical reconstruction of Italy an amount of influence equal to that wielded by Mr. Gladstone in England in the sixties. But while the Grand Old Man began his political career as the hope of the stern unbending Tories (so much so that his first notable publication was a defence of the principles of the Church establishment of which he was in process of time so keen an adversary), Zanardelli never shifted his position substantially, remaining faithful to his strong belief in the all-healing properties of liberal principles. For this reason, by adherents as well as opponents, he was, more than once, called a doctrinaire and a Girondin.

Zanardelli was born in 1826. Brescia, his native town, has deservedly received from Italian historians the name of "Lioness," for the several stubborn defences that she opposed to successive besiegers. Ethnographers and students of comparative linguistics agree that, during the Longobard invasion of Insubria, the then Brixia district was peopled by an Anglie tribe, which followed their long-bearded kinsfolk from the banks of the Elbe to those of the Po. The Brescia people are to this day a hard-working community, easily moved to noble and daring enterprises. In the *Mille* of Garibaldi, the Bresciani were numerous. Pavia, the great university town of Lombardy, gave a still larger contingent: Bergamo came third. The Zanardelli family belonged to that middle class of North Italy among which the study of law was considered as the gate to riches and local influence. According to custom, Giuseppe Zanardelli was attending the University of Pavia when the revolution of 1848 broke out. Flinging aside the Digest and its comments, he enlisted in one of those volunteer corps which were rather strangely attired in homespun velveteen, in which they were much more picturesque than warlike, and distinguished himself in many encounters with the disciplined Austrian troops. After the defeat of the Sardinian regular army at Custozza and Milan, he repaired to Tuscany. There with Tenca, Colombo and Allievi (all Lombard refugees), he became a

journalist on the "*Costituente*," one of the few liberal newspapers then existing.

A few months later the Italian fortunes were wrecked utterly at Novara: Rome and Venice were, respectively, restored to the Pope and to Austria.

Tuscany was scarcely a free country. The volunteer of 1848, the journalist of 1849, came back to his native place that Haynau and Nugent had reconquered with much bloodshed from the insurgent citizens. Nugent, an Irish general, officer in the Austrian service, was fatally wounded in storming the place, and bequeathed a sum of money to the valiant town for the building of a hospital, atoning in a way for the cruelties perpetrated by his colleague, Haynau.

Those who took part in the Revolution were considered as black sheep by the Vienna administration. Giuseppe Zanardelli's application for permission to practise the profession of law was in consequence met with a refusal. He then became a private teacher of jurisprudence and a contributor to the "*Crepuscolo*" of Milan, writing essays on moral and political science. The political education of Signor Zanardelli took place during the period between 1849 and 1859; and, though he adopted Mazzini's theory, he abstained from inconclusive revolutionary movements condemned to certain failure. However, the inquisitive police of Austria considered the young teacher a dangerous man; and when he applied for the office of Secretary to the local Chamber of Commerce in Brescia, he was told that he could obtain it on condition of becoming a writer on the imperial and royal "*Gazzetta di Milano*," the organ of the Governor-General: this he refused to do.

His secret connection with the Liberal party in Piedmont afforded him excellent opportunity to render great service to the cause of independence in 1859. As soon as Brescia was evacuated by the Austrian troops and Signor Depretis was appointed governor of it, Zanardelli helped him in the settlement of the new order of things. In 1860, he set forth towards Naples, where he prepared the marvellous entrance of Garibaldi, of whom he became soon a most devoted friend.

From the year 1860 almost to the time of his death, the work of Giuseppe Zanardelli in behalf of the Liberal party continued uninterrupted, giving to the cause so dear to his heart the benefit

of his brilliant talent as debater, his sound doctrines as a classical scholar, his wide legal experience, his studies as an economist, and above all the exceptional power which he possessed of quickly assimilating the most diverse branches of general knowledge.

It was owing to this uncommon endowment that, after ten years of probation on the Opposition benches, when in 1876 the Conservative party was defeated and the Progressionists rose to office, Signor Zanardelli was chosen Minister of Public Works. In that office, he displayed a wonderful knowledge of the complicated machinery of administration, in the study of which he had lost no opportunity to master its intricacies during his long experience as a Member of Committees in the Opposition interest. He did not remain long in office, however, on account of the difference of opinion between himself and his colleagues on a capital question: viz., whether the railways were to be managed by the Government or by private companies. His ideas on the subject were too deeply rooted to allow him to give way, so he resigned; but in March, 1878, he returned to office as Minister of the Interior under Cairoli, who had succeeded the wily Depretis. In this new department, he had an opportunity to put into practice many of his beloved articles of faith—among others, the theory that “a liberal government should repress rather than prevent offences”; when, to disconcert him, Sassanante, an obscure and almost illiterate cook, attempted the life of King Humbert. The Conservative party took advantage of the event; and, although it could not recover the lead in Italian politics, it still possessed sufficient influence to eject from power the man who was unjustly held responsible for the insane act of a degenerate wretch.

Zanardelli then retired to private life for a period of three years, from 1878 to 1881, during which time he rose to the highest repute in his profession of law. He published then his volume called “*L'Avvocatura*,” which in Italy is considered a masterpiece of eloquence; and he so grew in authority in the estimation of his country that, on Cairoli's downfall from power, which happened in 1881, and which was succeeded by Depretis's return to office, Zanardelli was indicated for the post of Minister of Justice. Twice with Depretis, once with Crispi, then with Rudini, Signor Zanardelli was retained in an office congenial to the studies of his youth, and to which he brought all the weight of his experience as a lawyer. Italy is indebted to Zanardelli's activity during his in-

cumbency in office as Minister of Justice for the following reforms: the Penal Code, the present electoral law, the establishment of the Supreme Court of Cassation for the final adjudication of all things concerning penal law, and the Code of Commerce.

In the intervals between his falling and rising again to power, Zanardelli was three times President of the Chamber of Deputies, a most important office according to the Italian Constitution. He was actually presiding over Parliament in 1893, when, at the clamorous downfall of Signor Giolitti, King Humbert invited him to form a Cabinet. The Conservative party made such strenuous opposition that both the desire of the ever-lamented sovereign and the loyal efforts of the statesman were baffled. Crispi came into power again; and, with him, a gale of reaction blew over the country followed quickly by the tumults in Sicily and Lunigiana, of which the Socialistic party soon took advantage. After Crispi's death, Zanardelli formed the last link between the Italy which, under Victor Emmanuel II., made her way amid rocks and against wind and tide, and the Italy of modern days. This man of lifelong experience was then indicated as the choice of the new King, who is a keen observer and a studious prince, whose stern sense of duty is a promise of earnestness and of inflexible righteousness. So it happens that, when Signor Saracco tendered his resignation as President of the Council, His Majesty, of his own free will, sent for Zanardelli and commanded him to form a Cabinet. It was with a liberal and patriotic spirit that his administration addressed itself to the high duties entrusted to it, and both Houses of Parliament were forthwith invited to pass the following bills:

1. For the institution of a bureau and committee intended to regulate the mutual relations between masters and workmen, in order to substitute arbitration for friction and strife;
2. For reforming the law on the frequent accidents occurring in the execution of public as well as private work;
3. For consolidating the military budget;
4. For fixing the contribution of the Treasury to the City Council of Rome, in order to finish the new thoroughfares and other works.

King Victor Emmanuel III. could not but see that there was a possible compromise between the Conservative and the Radical programme. More than once, King Humbert's Ministers had,

under the solemn form of a Royal Message to Parliament, announced a series of bills implying reform in behalf of the masses, but under the pressure of the classes the bills never came to life. Moreover, between the North and the South, since 1860, existed an economical inequality: the former having become industrial, while the other still remained agricultural. Signor Crispi, a Southerner by birth, had unwittingly been the cause of the feeling between the two parts of the country, because the tariff war with France opened by him had ruined the Southern exports of wine, oranges, oil and sulphur. Consequently, all the products of the sunny South were purchased at the lowest price by the more advanced Northern people, and paid back in goods of their own manufacture. In a few words, the North drained from the South all the currency. The removal of those evils was greatly desired by King Victor Emmanuel, and was the constant aim of his Premier, who on the 7th of March, 1901, delivered one of the most remarkable speeches of his long Parliamentary career.

It contains the programme of the new reign, and its items have been each and all brought to executive form. Thus, no new debt has been made, even under the mask of railway construction. The rotten administration of some of our cities has been submitted to a severe inquest, resulting in the removal of the evil-doers. The *octroi* duty on flour and *pasta* has been abolished. As this reform, much desired in a country where bread and soup form the basis of nourishment for the working classes, entailed the loss of 21,000,000 francs for the Treasury, the inheritance tax was modified in such a manner as to assume a progressive character, as in France and in England. Subsequently, he induced the Conservative party to consent to a bill for the insurance of laborers, and to another regulating the work of children of both sexes employed in factories.

The moral points of likeness between Zanardelli and Gladstone have been already referred to. Perhaps in the Italian statesman they are more apparent. Like Gladstone, he had an implicit faith in the power of eloquence; and, endowed, as he was, with an easy, correct and dialectic style, he used it on all occasions, rather preferring to have as hearers his constituency than his Parliamentary colleagues. As a political adversary of Depretis and Crispi, some of his campaigns would form the subject of more than one brilliant chapter in the history of constitutional liberty in Italy. As

a Cabinet Minister, his faithful Iseo and Brescia electors were often the recipients of his plans for reform, as the Midlothian men were of those of Gladstone. Wishing to study in person the wants of Basilicata and Puglia, not only did he, in his seventy-fifth year, subject himself to the fatigue of a journey in a roadless country, but he stopped at the principal boroughs and there delivered long and well-constructed speeches with the fervor of a young man.

As Gladstone sought in the peaceful forest land of Hawarden a relaxation from his political toil, so Zanardelli used to repair to his villa of Madero on the Garda, the largest of the deep blue lakes of North Italy, as soon as his numerous duties left him time for rest. There among the books of one of the richest private libraries of his country, and a precious collection of *objets d'art*, he received the warm homage of his fellow countrymen. No other man enjoyed the popularity which Zanardelli enjoyed in his native district, where everyone professed warm admiration for "Pi," such being the contracted form of his Christian name in the hard local dialect.

There he composed his treatise on "*Avvocatura*," the Penal Code which bears his name, and many of those speeches of his which, delivered in a country where political eloquence is but the gift of a few and where debaters are more forcible than accurate, are remarkable for their literary form.

Zanardelli's artistic taste was a factor in his success as a statesman, because it urged him to promote the purchase of Villa Borghese, which under the name of "Villa Umberto I." is to become the Roman *Bois de Boulogne*; and it moved him to settle the complicated question of the state contribution to the City Council of Rome, in order to provide the capital with all the appliances of a modern city, without spoiling the remnants of its ancient splendor.

So Zanardelli did not deserve the reproach that the young generation justly addresses to the men of the Revolution. Indeed, energetic men of action as the men of the Revolution were, they were void of any sense of art. In the Italy of their time, there was room for hard soldiers, for keen political agents, even for wily and not over-scrupulous intriguers, but none for artists. Never had Italy been so devoid of writers, painters, sculptors, and architects as during the period between 1860 and 1880. Carducci, d'Annunzio, Monteverde, Morelli, came to their countrymen's



notice at the close of the century, with the dawn of a change in what the French call "*la mentalité nationale*." Zanardelli, as a man of more refined education than Crispi, Cairoli, Nicotera and Depretis, was in close contact with the racial sentiment, which is essentially artistic.

In conclusion, the last survivor of the band of patriots who go by the common name of "Makers of Italy," Giuseppe Zanardelli followed to the letter the programme contained in the eloquent words that Mazzini addressed to the youth of his times:

"When your soul, my young Brothers, has discovered its proper mission, follow it, and let nothing arrest you; follow it, as far as your strength will permit; follow it, whether received by your contemporaries or misunderstood, whether blessed by love or visited by hatred, whether strong through your association with others or relegated to that sad solitude which almost always exists around the Martyrs of Thought. The way is clear before you: you will be cowards and you will sacrifice your future if, owing to delusions or misfortunes, you do not march in it to the end."

DR. GUIDO BIAGI.